

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 18-26 and 28-30 are pending in the application, with claim 18 being the independent claim. Claim 31 is currently sought to be cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. Claims 1 - 17 were previously cancelled. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Applicants note with appreciation, the Examiner's acceptance of drawing(s) filed on June 27, 2003.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103

On page 2 of the Office Action, claim 31 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,304,389 to Shibayama (hereinafter "Shibayama") in view of WO 98/28644 to Schultz (hereinafter "Schultz") (using U.S. Patent No. 6,366,410 as a translation).

Without acquiescing to the Examiner's grounds for rejection and only to expedite prosecution, claim 31 is currently cancelled rendering this rejection moot.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication of allowability of claims 18-26 and 28-30. With the current cancellation of claim 31, Applicants

respectfully assert that the instant application is in condition for allowance and issue thereupon.

Applicants note the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance presented on pages 4-5 of the Office Action. Applicants reserve the right to demonstrate that the pending and allowable claims are allowable over the references made of record for further reasons related to any of their recited features. Applicants further contend that reservation of this right does not give rise to any implication regarding whether the Applicants agree with or acquiesce in the reasoning provided by the Examiner in the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

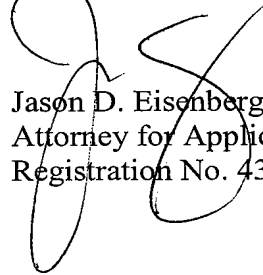
Amdt. dated June 12, 2007
Reply to Office Action of May 18, 2007

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Respectfully submitted,

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